

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Easter 6

Collect:

God our Redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever, Amen.

Please read through these passages slowly and reflectively before reading my sermon.

Acts 17:22-31 Psalm 66:7-18 1Peter 3:13-22 **John 14:15-21**

In writing and reading may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Today's gospel is a continuation of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples that we heard begin in last week's gospel passage. Last week we reflected on how Jesus himself is both the way to and the destination of the eternal life with God he offers us. I suggested various ways in which the traditions of faith help us centre our lives in our relationship with Jesus: through the sacraments, especially of baptism and communion, through our prayer and worship, through learning more about him as we read the gospels, and in following what he commands us to do – especially in the commandment of love.

Today's gospel begins with Jesus' encouragement to keep his commandments and from there Jesus gives his friends an insight in to the work of God within us: the ways in which God centres our lives in our relationship with Jesus. In this part of the conversation Jesus is reminding them and us that our life with God does not depend on our own efforts, except in so far that we remain aware of the gifts of God's presence within us.

Throughout the passage, Jesus contrasts what "you", the people he is speaking to (his disciples, and now us) who are those who will

be able to perceive the work of God within them, with “the world” who won’t be able to. Before we start exploring further what he is showing us, I think it is important to be careful how we hear this contrast. Very often it can be understood as an “us and them” contrast but I think it is quite helpful in thinking about what Jesus is saying here to think about how both terms might apply to us. I know there are times when I am very conscious of feeling like the “you” Jesus is talking to, when I am focused on responding to God at work in and around me; but then there are other times, usually when life is too busy, when I don’t notice my life has its centre where God abides within.

In the midst of these times which are anxious for many, lonely for some and strange for us all, one of the gifts people have commented on is the time that we are having allows for greater stillness and space; time in the beauty of nature, time to notice that God is a daily presence, with us all the time, if we do but notice. More deeply perhaps, we can recognise that we do not have to earn God’s presence by our useful activity, all that is necessary is a trust in that presence. Stepping out of our “normal” world for a time may have helped us become more fully the “you” Jesus is talking to here.

So what is he saying to us?

“If you love me you will keep my commandments.”

Love is where we start. This not a command it is a description. If we love Jesus we will keep his commandment to “love one another” and not just one another but our neighbours, which, we gradually discover through Jesus’ loving, means all around us. Love of Jesus generates loving action of all kinds coming from our hearts. By rooting everything in love Jesus is casting out any action that comes from fear. This is not “do as you’re told or else” it is “allow all that you do to be born in love and guided by love”.

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever”

Jesus is talking about who we usually call the Holy Spirit. The title he gives the Spirit has a range of meaning. In the translation I am

using it is "Advocate" which draws on the legal figure who puts a case – presents things clearly so that they can be understood and the good of the client can be served. In other places Jesus talks of the Spirit helping us learn more of the Father than he himself could teach, so this Advocate will both help us know the Father and help us come truthfully to the Father in all that we need. Sometimes the translation is "Counsellor or Comforter" which perhaps holds on to that meaning of the one who comes alongside to help but without the hard edge of a judicial setting.

"You know him, because he abides in you, he will be in you"

This is one of Jesus' very simple but very breath taking statements. We have within us, the abiding – the ever present and at home with us- Spirit of God. We don't have to go beyond ourselves to know the Spirit of God who leads us into all we experience of God in creation.

"You will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you"

And then he does it again: one simple sounding sentence that tells us that through friendship with Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit we are sharing in the love of the Godhead, the Trinity. St Pauls uses poetry to say something similar: "In him we live and move and have our being"

Can we use this time to recognise ourselves in the "you" Jesus is talking too?

To recognise the love which motivates our relationships and actions towards other?

To recognise the action of the Holy Spirit abiding in us?

To recognise that our lives are caught up in the live and love of God: Father Son and Holy Spirit?

Some of us will find this recognition by turning within in quiet prayer and reflection, attuning to the motions of the Spirit in our soul and perhaps then noticing how they lead us out into a loving response to the needs of the world.

For others of us it will be by our loving action in the world that we first notice the work of God in us, tracing it to its source in the guidance of the Spirit in our soul and drawing us into resting in God's love.

We start and end in the love that is outpoured in the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's work in us, our joy and our glory.

This week I invite you to take perhaps just one of the sentences of Jesus' teaching which I have highlighted here – either one that attracts you, or one that is difficult and use it as a focus for prayer: asking God to reveal where it is true for **you**.

The blessing of God the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us this week and always. Amen

Ever present God, Be our comfort in times of uncertainty, our stability in times of change, our peace through anxiety, our companion in all things. Amen

Gospel readings this week:

Monday 18th John 15:26-16:4 Rogation Day

Tuesday 19th John 16:5-11 Rogation Day

Wednesday 20th John 16:12-15 Rogation Day

Ascension Day Luke 24:44-end

Friday 22nd John 16:20-23

Saturday 23rd John 16:23-18

Rogation Collects

Rogation-tide are days of prayer for the fruitfulness of the land. This year we may want to pray for all on whose labour we depend for

our well-being and for good stewardship of the gift of Creation, the land around us and our economy.

Almighty God whose will it is that the earth and the sea should bear fruit in due season: bless the labour of those who work on land and sea, give us a good harvest and the grace always to rejoice in your fatherly care.....

Almighty God and Father, you have so ordered our life that we are dependent on one another: prosper those engaged in commerce and industry and direct their minds and hands that they may rightly use your gifts in the service of others.....

God our Father, you never cease the work you have begun and prosper with your blessing all human labour: make us wise and faithful stewards of your gifts that we may serve the common good and seek that justice where all may share the good things you pour upon us.....

.....through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.